**Should I Apply to the NSF GRFP This Year?**

*The information below is to assist students in deciding when to apply for the NSF GRFP. However, this is not an official document and should be read after reviewing NSF guidelines. If there is any contradiction between the information here and the information in the NSF documents, then rely on the NSF document.*

**DO apply if you answer “yes” to either of the following questions:**

* Are you an undergrad senior considering graduate school?
  + If you meet the eligibility requirements, you definitely should apply! If you do not receive the fellowship this time, you will be eligible to apply once as a graduate student. (Regardless of whether or not you apply as an undergraduate, you still can only apply once as a graduate student.)
* Are you a second year graduate student?
  + All second year graduate students who meet the eligibility criteria should apply. This is your last chance!

**You MAY want to apply if you are a first year graduate student:**

The eligibility criteria specifies that students can only apply once as an undergraduate and once as a graduate student. The following are only some points to consider; be sure to discuss this question with your advisor.

* Do you meet the eligibility criteria?
* Are you a master’s student?
  + If you are a master’s student and do *not* plan to continue on to a PhD, then apply as a first year student. If you plan to continue on to a PhD program, then consider the questions below. On one hand, you could wait a year and strengthen your qualifications. On the other hand, if you got the fellowship in this round, then you would be a very desirable candidate for PhD programs.
* Do you have a research area that is truly compelling to you?
* Can you create a well-reasoned research plan?
* Do you have great letters of recommendation?
* Have you done outreach or activities that fit into “broader impacts”?
* Have you done previous research?
* Do you have publications? And/or have you presented your research?
* Have you demonstrated leadership?

If you answer yes to most of the above questions, you may want to apply as a first year graduate student. You will be evaluated as a first year graduate student, so you may be more competitive at this stage.

If you answer no to most of the questions above and are certain that you will be eligible next year, work on making yourself a more competitive candidate and apply next year!